

CONTEMPORARY MORAL PROBLEMS: An ITETHIC Reader

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PREFACE

Before doing this book, I do not have any doubts on whether or not I can finish the book. It is because of my experiences during VERTSOL last term. We successfully created our own book that is why I gained experience on how I can balance and manage my time when doing the chapter by chapter book review. It was really a pleasure for me to do this book because as I was reading and browsing the book, I encountered a lot of issues and problems that a human being has experienced. I would like to thank Mr. Paul Amerigo Pajo for giving us Benildeans, the pleasure to read and create a book about ethics. This book will serves as a lesson to all of us with regards in doing what is right and what is must.

DEDICATION

Family

- For giving me the motivation on how important education is in our lives

Friends

- For supporting me throughout the creation of this book \

God

- For giving me enlightenment as I create this book

Professor

- For giving me another chance to create a book

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James Rachels: Egoism and Moral Scepticism

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what egoism is
- To whom does egoism apply or affect
- To learn ideas about morality

Quote: "No one, it is commonly believed, would have such iron strength of mind as to stand fast in doing right or keep his hands off other men's goods, when he could go to the market place and fearlessly help himself to anything he wanted, enter houses and sleep with any woman he chose, set prisoners free and kill men at his pleasure, and in a word go about among men with the powers of a god. He would behave better than the other, both would take the same course"

Review:

In this particular chapter, for me it talks about philosophies and point of views coming from James Rachels. In this chapter, he talked about egoism and moral skepticism. Egoism is the normative ethical position that moral agents ought to do what is in their own self-interest. Ethical egoism contrasts with ethical altruism, which holds that moral agents have an obligation to help and serve others. Egoism and altruism both contrast with ethical utilitarianism, which holds that a moral agent should treat one's self with no higher regard than one has for others, but that one also should not sacrifice one's own interests to help others' interests, so long as one's own interests are substantially-equivalent to the others' interests and well-being. The next point that James Rachels talked was moral skepticism. Moral skepticism denotes a class of metaethical theories all members of which entail that no one has any moral knowledge. Many moral skeptics also make the stronger, modal, claim that moral knowledge is impossible. Moral skepticism is particularly opposed to moral realism, the view that there are knowable, mind-independent moral truths. For me, to conclude this particular chapter, what I can say is that whatever comes out into our minds, even if it is good or it is bad, we should not regret or we should not feel bad or guilty for what we have said. We should believe with whatever we have said. But of course, before we do those things, we, as a person or as a human beings must have a clear mind sets or a clean perspective in life so that our decisions will be positive and will create productivity.

What I have learned:

- Have a clear mindset
- Be sure on what you decide
- Egoism is a selfish act

Integrative questions:

1. What is egoism?
2. What is moral sceptism?
3. Are they different?
4. How does one know if he/she has a clear mindset?
5. What is the legend of Gyges?

Source:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical_egoism

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_skepticism

John Arthur: Religion, Morality and Conscience

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know the connectivity of the three terms
- To understand the terms fully
- To know where these terms are they applicable

Quote: "An eye for an eye"

Review:

In this particular chapter, for me it talks about issues between religion, morality and conscience. Religion is a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a supernatural agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs. Religion refers to both the personal practices related to communal faith and to group rituals and communication stemming from shared conviction. Religion is sometimes used interchangeably with faith or belief system, but it is more socially defined than personal convictions, and it entails specific behaviors. Next term is morality, which is defined as a code of conduct or a set of beliefs distinguishing between right and wrong behaviors. In its descriptive use, morals are arbitrarily and subjectively created by philosophy, religion, and/or individual conscience. Morality does not explain why any behavior should be considered right or wrong, only that it may be classified so. For the most part right and wrong acts are classified as such because they cause benefit or harm. This is not by any means an all encompassing criterion, it is possible that many moral beliefs are due to prejudice, ignorance or even hatred. For me, to end or to conclude this chapter, what I can say is that morality can and will influence people to another people. Definitely it will or it can affect many people depending on what you are to do. The most important thing is, even if we have different point of views, we know what is just. We know what is right from wrong.

What I have learned:

- Religion, Morality and Conscience are interconnected
- People must know what is right and just
- More issues aside from the three terms mentioned

Integrative questions:

1. How are the three terms related?
2. Is John Arthur right?
3. What is conscience?
4. What is religion?
5. What is morality?

Source:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morality>

Friedrich Nietzsche: Master and Slavery Morality

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what master-slave morality is
- To know where they can be applied
- To know if they play a big role

Quote: "Wotan placed a hard heart in my breast"

Review:

Friedrich Nietzsche argued that there were two fundamental types of morality, Master morality and slave morality. Master morality weighs actions on a scale of good or bad consequences unlike slave morality which weighs actions on a scale of good or evil intentions. What Nietzsche meant by 'morality' deviates from common understanding of this term. For Nietzsche, a particular morality is inseparable from the formation of a particular culture. This means that its language, codes and practices, narratives, and institutions are informed by the struggle between these two types of moral valuation. For Nietzsche, master-slave morality provides the basis of all exegesis of Western thought.

Friedrich Nietzsche defined master morality as the morality of the strong-willed. Nietzsche criticizes the view, which he identifies with contemporary British ideology, that good is everything that is helpful; what is bad is what is harmful. He argues that this view has forgotten the origins of the values, and thus it calls what is useful good on the grounds of habitualness - what is useful has always been defined as good, therefore usefulness is goodness as a value.

Unlike master morality which is sentiment, slave morality is literally re-sentiment revaluing that which the master values. This strays from the valuation of actions based on consequences to the valuation of actions based on intention. As master morality originates in the strong, slave morality originates in the weak. Because slave morality is a reaction to oppression, it villainizes its oppressors. Slave morality is the inverse of master morality.

What I have learned:

- People should know how to follow
- Slave morality is the inverse of Master morality
- Egoism is related to master morality

Integrative questions:

1. What is master morality?
2. What is slave morality?
3. How are they different?
4. Are they connected or do they play the same role?
5. In master-slave morality, who is right?

Source:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master-slave_morality

Mary Midgley: Trying out one's new sword

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what new sword means in this context
- To know more perspectives in the philosophical aspects
- To know ideas what Midgley had said

Quote: "There's something very good here, but I can't quite make it out what it is yet"

Review:

In this particular content, Mary Midgley had focus on the term moral isolationism and judgment. Isolationism is a foreign policy which combines a non-interventionist military policy and a political policy of economic nationalism. In my personal opinion, what I have understood based from it is that in moral isolationism, we really can or we can never understand the culture of other race or the culture of other people besides from our culture itself. We people tend to make judgments about it. Of course for me, we should not make any judgments if we do not have any knowledge on a particular race or a particular culture unless we gained or we had an experience with it. Another term discussed in this context is the term judgment. The term judgment generally refers to the considered evaluation of evidence in the formation of making a decision. For me, isolationism and judgment are interconnected. They are interconnected because you make a decision at a critical point of time. As I have said a while ago and what Mary Midgley said, we should never judge or make any conclusion if we have not yet experienced or we have no idea about a particular thing. It will be unethical and immoral if we judge without any stated facts, which lessen or dissolves our credibility as a person or as a student. The chapter explained that ethical relativism is internally self-contradictory. We as a human being should prioritize those things because all of those are important matters.

What I have learned:

- Moral isolationism
- Relation of isolationism to judgment
- Two types of judgment

Integrative questions:

1. What is moral isolationism?
2. What is judgment?
3. How are they different?
4. How are they relevant?
5. What is relativism?

Source:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isolationism>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judgment>

John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what is/are the perspective of John Stuart Mill
- To know what utilitarianism is
- To know the difference between the perspectives of the authors

Quote: "By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain, by unhappiness, pain and privation of pleasure"

Review:

In this particular content, the topic discussed by John Stuart Mill was the concept of Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is the ideas that the moral worth of an action is determined solely by its utility in providing happiness or pleasure as summed among all sentient beings. It is thus a form of consequentialism, meaning that the moral worth of an action is determined by its outcome. Utilitarianism is often described by the phrase the greatest good for the greatest number of sentient beings, and is also known as the greatest happiness principle. Utility, the good to be maximized, has been defined by various thinkers as happiness or pleasure although preference utilitarians define it as the satisfaction of preferences. It may be described as a life stance, with happiness or pleasure being of ultimate importance. Utilitarianism can be characterised as a quantitative and reductionist approach to ethics. It can be contrasted with deontological ethics and virtue ethics, as well as with other varieties of consequentialism. For me, what I have learned and to make life easier, utilitarianism simply says that when a people does an action, that is the only time that there should only be an outcome. As said earlier, the moral worth of an action should be determined by its outcome. In this content, aside from utilitarianism, there were also two terms which have been discussed. They are the rule utilitarianism and the act utilitarianism. The difference between them for me is the action that they will be doing. Its consequentialism.

What I have learned:

- Utilitarianism
- Act and rule utilitarianism
- Hedonism

Integrative questions:

1. What is utilitarianism?
2. What is rule utilitarianism?
3. What is act utilitarianism?
4. How are they relevant?
5. What is Hedonism?

Source:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utilitarianism>

James Rachels: The debate over Utilitarianism

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To understand the argues about utilitarianism
- To know what are the ideas behind it
- To know more about the resilience of the theory or principle

Quote: "Man does not strive after happiness, only the Englishman does that"

Review:

In this content, I will just be telling or I will just be sighting example. For me, the overall story of utilitarianism is all about happiness. This is the start of the story. I have a friend who is so much in love with this girl. With his love for that girl, he was doing all his best just to court that girl. Examples of his doings are treating the girls to a fine dining restaurant, giving gifts which are too expensive, following whatever the girl says or whatever the girl commands and many more. With that love and with whatever the boy does, for me it is not love anymore. It is obsession. Why obsession? It is because the boy is becoming a follower of that said girl. He follows whatever the girl says or commands, which for me is definitely wrong or incorrect. We can follow them, for as long as it is not abusing. It does not degrade the capability of a man or a boy. For me, there is no love and definitely there will be no happiness in there. I know that the boy is happy and in love, but how about the girl? Is she really happy? Or is she just enjoying due to the benefits that she gets from the guy? I think that was really wrong. There is no happiness in there as related to the story until the part of the debate. In life, we should know when things are to be done in a correct manner. We should know that and treat others fairly.

What I have learned:

- The debate over utilitarianism
- Utilitarian doctrine
- Utilitarian principles

Integrative questions:

1. What is utilitarianism?
2. What are the issues behind it?
3. What is the utilitarian doctrine?
4. How are they relevant?
5. What did James Rachels pointed out?

Immanuel Kant: The Categorical Imperative

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what categorical imperative means
- To whom does it apply or affect
- To learn the connection of imperative from good will

Quote: "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law"

Review:

In this particular chapter, basically it talks about the categorical imperative and the good will. I will be starting with the good will first. The good will for me is a natural act which leads us human into the doing of the right, correct or the moral act. It is not important in this world if you are rich, it is not in this world if you are powerful or you are in authority. What is important is that even if you are rich or if you are poor, you do the right acts. You do things accordingly. You follow the law. For me that is the good will. An example of a good will is that when you are walking along the streets, then you accidentally saw an old lady who will be crossing the street toughly, you, as a human being will not think twice or thrice if you will be helping the old lady or not to cross the street. As a human being, you will do what is right. That is to help sincerely. That can be for me a concrete example of the good will. Next topic is about the categorical imperative. In Wikipedia, The categorical imperative helps us to know which actions are obligatory and which are forbidden. Hypothetical imperatives are conditional: 'If I want x then I must do y'. These imperatives are not moral. For Kant, the only moral imperatives were categorical: 'I ought to do x', with no reference to desires or needs. To sum it all, whatever these philosophers believing in, as a person, we should do our duties at all cause. We should do moral things and act correctly.

What I have learned:

- People should develop their good will
- The person itself will be the only one who can change himself
- Principle has two grounds: objective and subjective

Integrative questions:

1. What is categorical imperative
2. How is it related to the good will?
3. What is a maxim?
4. What is a hypothetical imperative?
5. How are they all interconnected

Source:

<http://members.fortunecity.com/rsrevision/kantandthecatimp.htm>

Aristotle: Happiness and Virtue

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what is Aristotle's perspective of Happiness and Virtue
- To know if they are relevant
- To understand more terms and principles

Quote: "Life of the rational element"

Review:

In this particular chapter, Aristotle discusses the principle or his principle of happiness and virtue. I will be first discussing happiness. Happiness in this story talks about that it is a cycle. It is a long cycle or a long process that each and every human being is desiring to achieve. As stated in the book, it is an activity of the soul. I believe with what Aristotle is saying. It is because based from personal experience, I really am looking and wanting for something good, which definitely is related to happiness. My concrete example for is this is when a student is studying. In our lives, all people are required to finish elementary, secondary and college level of study. When that particular person graduated from college, then definitely that person will celebrate and will be very happy. That is how this story is related. When a person achieves something, then they get to be happy. Next topic is about virtue. Virtue is related and a part of happiness. For me, virtue can be an act which pushes a person in achieving happiness. Before you attain nirvana, there are actions which will lead you to gaining that happiness, and for me, that is the virtue. In this story, Aristotle mentioned two parts of virtue. It is the intellectual and moral virtue. To sum up, I agree with what Aristotle was saying. Happiness and virtue will be depending on us humans. It depends on our faith. It depends on our decisions.

What I have learned:

- Relevance of happiness and virtue
- Aristotle's perspective
- The process of attaining happiness

Integrative questions:

1. What is intellectual virtue?
2. What is moral virtue?
3. Are they different?
4. How does a person attain nirvana?
5. What can be hindrances in attaining it?

Joel Feinberg: The Nature and value of rights

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what is/are the nature and value of rights
- To know what Joel Feinberg illustrates
- To understand more terms and principles

Quote: “earned gratuity”

Review:

In this particular chapter, Joel Feinberg talks about the nature and value of rights relating to the Nowheresville people and for me which should also relate to the people in the world or the people who live into the world today. As stated in the story, people who are in Nowheresville do not exemplify or does not have any rights at all which should be very unethical for me. I said that because relating from the previous topic which is happiness and virtue, how can one person or how can that person achieve happiness if he or she does not have any rights at all? How can one person live life to the fullest if he or she does not have rights? Am I right? For me, like here in the Philippines, once a person is born, he or she has rights already. The same thing should happen to Nowheresville. People should be equal. Another part of the story discussed was duty. Duty for me is an obligation which should be fulfilled. It should be fulfilled morally or correctly. My example for rights and duty is that when a person is studying in school, it is his or her duty to pay back his/her parents by giving good grades. It is his/her duty because their parents are paying for their education. It is their duty to study and at the same time they have the right to play, sleep and do what they want to do. For me, this makes a person equal.

What I have learned:

- Rights of a person
- Feinberg’s perspective
- People should have rights equally

Integrative questions:

1. What is duty?
2. What are the rights of a person?
3. Are they different?
4. How can they be balanced?
5. Why are we obliged?

Ronald Dworkin: Taking Rights seriously

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To understand why we need to take our rights seriously
- To know what Ronald Dworkin wants to point out
- To understand more terms and principles

Quote: "If the government itself is not taking right seriously, then they do not take the law seriously either"

Review:

In this particular chapter, Ronald Dworkin particularly talks about how a person or why a certain person needs to take rights seriously. Ronald Dworkin also points out the government in this situation. Why government? I said that because it is from the government where rights, law and justice start. They are the mentors of these said terms. For me, we need to take rights seriously because we own it. It is for our own benefit. It protects us from any harm. For me, we people are not the only ones who should take it seriously, the government also and must do and take it seriously. It is because the government controls the wealth of a country. If they know how to handle it properly, then that country for me will be a productive, top and rich country. Here in the Philippines, we really need to take rights seriously. It is because poverty, corruption is/are all over the country. That is why we need to speak. We need to tell the crap that is/are happening within the government. We can do that because it is our right and we have a right to speak because this is a democratic country. We have the right to speech. To sum it all up, we, as a human being should follow rules and regulations wherever we are. We should take all of our rights seriously. It is for our own good. We ourselves will be benefiting from it. No one can interfere us people.

What I have learned:

- Why take rights seriously
- Dworkin's point of taking rights seriously
- No one can intercept us when we speak for truth

Integrative questions:

1. What are the rights of a person?
2. Why do we need to take rights seriously?
3. Is it necessary?
4. What will happen if we do not follow?
5. Who is Ronald Dworkin?

John Rawls: A Theory of Justice

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To understand what are the theories of justice
- To know what John Rawls wants to point out
- To understand more terms and principles

Quote: "Poetry as metaphor"

Review:

In this particular chapter, John Rawls points out the two principles of justice. The first principle is the equal basic liberties and the second principle is the arrangement of social and economic inequalities. For me, this talks about the free and the rational types of people. The first principle points out that in order for that person to be respected, he/she should also respect the others. It is so for them both to attain equal amount of liberty and respect for one another. The second principle is the same for me. For a person to be respected, he or she should also respect others so that there will be no discriminations. There will be no inequalities. Everyone will be equal. Everyone will chase liberty or will have liberty. My concrete example for both this principle is what happened to Haiti. It is the earthquake that occurred and destroyed a lot of houses and infrastructures. The relation of the theory of justice there is that all were destroyed by the earthquake. When I say all, I meant by the poor and the rich. No one survived, even if you are rich or the poor ones. The relation is that during the time of calamities, not only are the poor ones who are in need of help but also the rich people. The rich and the poor need to work together to survive and begin a new life. They need to cope up with each other for them to rise. No discriminations. There is respect. They are equal.

What I have learned:

- Perspective of John Rawls
- Importance of respect and justice
- Fairness and balance

Integrative questions:

1. Who is John Rawls
2. What is the theory of justice
3. What are the principles of justice?
4. Are they significant?
5. What is the difference of a free and rational person?

Annette Baier: The need for more than justice

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To understand what justice really is
- To know what Annette Baier wants to point out
- To understand more terms and principles

Quote: "The legal sense"

Review:

In this particular chapter, Annette Baier points out the theory of justice. But before that, I will be first defining what justice really is. Justice is the concept of moral rightness based on ethics, rationality, law, natural law, religion, fairness, or equity. Justice concerns itself with the proper ordering of things and people within a society. As a concept it has been subject to philosophical, legal, and theological reflection and debate throughout our history. A number of important questions surrounding justice have been fiercely debated over the course of western history: What is justice? What does it demand of individuals and societies? What is the proper distribution of wealth and resources in society: equal, meritocratic, according to status, or some other arrangement? There are myriad possible answers to these questions from divergent perspectives on the political and philosophical spectrum. For me, I think that in this world today, there really is a need for more than justice. Why did I say that? Look around the environment. There are multiple corruptions, there are multiple poverties around the planet every single day. With these powerful people standing within the government, we, as an ordinary people will have difficulties in attaining justice. For me, it is really immoral. A person who did something wrong or unjust should get punished or should suffer the consequence, not that if a particular attorney and judge are being paid by a powerful person, the case will be forfeited or will belong to the accused. We need fairness in this world.

What I have learned:

- Definition of justice
- Theory of justice
- Baier's point of justice

Integrative questions:

1. What can be sources of corruption?
2. What can be sources of poverty?
3. Why is there a need for more than justice?
4. Who is Annette Baier?
5. When can this world attain equality?

Source:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice>